

## 86 EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND EEFOEMER

the least excusable of her many *amours* was sad am repulsive.

Meantime other great workers, as diligent as she, -wer steadily pursuing their lifework. Littré\*, whom Zola kne v slightly, for Hachettes were his publishers, and on whom. It called in his modest second-floor rooms in the Rue d'Assas was continuing his great dictionary of the French language, and making his first attempt to enter the Academy, to foiled, however, by the frantic bigotry of Bishop Dupaulouj whereas those minor lights, Camille Doucet and PreVost Paradol, secured without difficulty the honours of election Then Littré\*'s neighbour, Michelet, — another of Hachette\* authors — whose quiet *soirees* Zola, like other young literar; men, occasionally attended, was completing his History o France. And there was much activity among historica writers generally, and, in particular, a large output of book: throwing light on phases and personages of the grea Ee volution.

At that period also a little band of so-called Parnassiai poets, inspired, some by Leconte de Lisle, and others b; Baudelaire, but, for the most part, gifted with little breadtl of thought, was imparting to French verse an extreme lit erary polish, at times attaining real beauty of expression

and at others lapsing into a *prfciositS*, which neither sonority of sound nor wealth of imagery could save from being ridicu lous. Meanwhile, in dramatic literature, Ponsard was pro ducing his version of "Le Lion Amoureux," and Augier 111 "Contagion," the latter's success being due, however, mor< to political reasons than to any intrinsic merit.<sup>2</sup> Then, ii

<sup>1</sup> The first Tolume had appeared in 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon III. and his wife attended the first performance at the Odfo;